



**Thanksgiving Mass for the Beatification of Blessed Francis Jordan
Homily**

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Archbishop of Perth**

**Wednesday, 8 September 2021
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

Here in Saint Mary's Cathedral, it is the custom to ring the Cathedral bells at midday and again at 6 pm in order to call people to prayer. The Angelus, the prayer which we pray at those times, is an invitation to reflect on the great mystery of the incarnation. The words of the prayer will be known to many of you:

*The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary and she conceived by the Holy Spirit.
Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word.
And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*

This evening, we gather in this Cathedral dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady to celebrate the birth of this extraordinary woman. That we do so over 2000 years after her birth, is a testament to the truth Mary proclaimed to her cousin Elizabeth: *The Lord has looked upon the loneliness of his servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed.*

As the gospel tradition makes clear the true blessedness, the true greatness, of Mary lies not so much in her physical motherhood as it does in the quality of her faith and of her discipleship. *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord,"* she said in response to the angel Gabriel. *"Let what you have said be done to me"*. This woman whose birthday we honour today has been celebrated throughout history because of her extraordinary faith, her extraordinary humility, and her extraordinary courage and fidelity. And, as the words of the angel's prayer make clear, the outcome of Mary's great faith and fidelity was world-shattering: *The Word became flesh and lived among us.*

This evening, though, we do not only celebrate the birthday in time of this great woman. We have gathered here tonight to celebrate also the birthday into eternity of Blessed Francis Jordan, the founder of the Society of the Divine Saviour, better known to us here in Australia as the Salvatorians. Francis Jordan died on 8 September, 1918, 103 years ago today. We gather tonight not long after the solemn beatification of Father Jordan earlier this year to rejoice and celebrate with the Salvatorian family as they renew their gratitude to God for the gift of their founder and the gift of the gospel path which he has laid out for them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.



The beatification of Father Jordan is, of course, a solemn judgement by the Church that this gospel path should be offered more widely to the universal Church and that it can be offered with great confidence as a true gift of the Holy Spirit to the whole Church. We all have much to learn from him and from his religious family

It is my strong conviction that every religious congregation formally recognised and promoted by the Church reveals for the whole Church a particular and essential dimension of the vast mystery of Christ. That the Word became flesh, as the Angelus prayer reminds us, is really an overwhelming and unfathomable mystery: that the God who is the creator and sustainer of the whole universe, with its unimaginable vastness and beauty, should so regard, so love, human beings that in the person of his divine Son God should take on human flesh so as to reveal in an accessible and profoundly human way the unbelievable compassion, mercy and love of God for us. No one person or one religious family could ever hope to do anything more than reveal just one small part of this great mystery. It is, I believe, the particular role of religious life in our Catholic Church to do precisely this: to hold up before the whole Church, in a clear and unambiguous way, something about the life of discipleship which is really essential for us all.

The discovery of the particular dimension of the mystery of Christ which any particular religious congregation or society is called to incarnate in a particular way is, of course, the task of that society. This discovery will be born of a deep reflection on the life of the founder as that life is lived out in the concrete circumstances of the founder's time in history, his or her cultural background and their personal experience. It will be found, too, in reflection on the ongoing story of the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the particular congregation or society moves on into its history after the death of the founder, and particularly in the way in which each congregation discerns the call to live its charism in the concrete and ever-changing circumstances of time and place.

But can I say, as an outsider who looks on the Salvatorians both with admiration and with gratitude for their presence here in Western Australia, it seems to me that the very name of the Society, the Society of the Divine Saviour, puts Jesus at the very heart and centre of your life and ministry, especially as the Word made flesh for our salvation. To reflect deeply on the meaning of the incarnation and to understand what this reveals about what we might call the mind and heart of God unveiled for us in the life of Jesus, and then to both live and proclaim what you discover through this profound reflection: all of this seems to me to be a precious, and I would say at this time urgently needed, gift which you can offer to the whole Church. The humility, the unparalleled selflessness, and the total self-abandonment all seen so starkly as Jesus dies on the cross, invite us to dare to think that humility and self-giving and total self-abandonment are in fact divine qualities. Perhaps we are rather shocked to think of God as humble, to think of God as servant, to think of God as self-abandoning, but if the incarnation is true, and if in Jesus we see revealed the hidden mystery of the inner life of the triune God, then this is precisely what we are being invited to ponder shocking though it may seem to some of us. This, after all, is what Saint Paul suggests when he proclaims that *“even though he was in the form of God Jesus did not count*



equality with God as something to be grasped: rather, he humbled himself, taking the form of a slave, and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross”.

We are richly blessed in this Archdiocese and more widely here in Western Australia, and in other parts of Australia as well, to have among us a group of people who have at the heart of their lives the call to reveal, both what they say, what they do, and how they do it, the humble, self-sacrificing, merciful face of God made known in Christ the saviour.

May our encounters with them remind us that this is the call of every Christian. May we all be inspired by their fidelity to their vocation to reflect deeply on the ways in which each of us in our particular circumstances are also called by God to a life of humility and of self-sacrificing love, ready to give our lives away each day for the good of others.